

# Ward Two Planning Initiative: Shaping the Future for Somerville's Southern Edge

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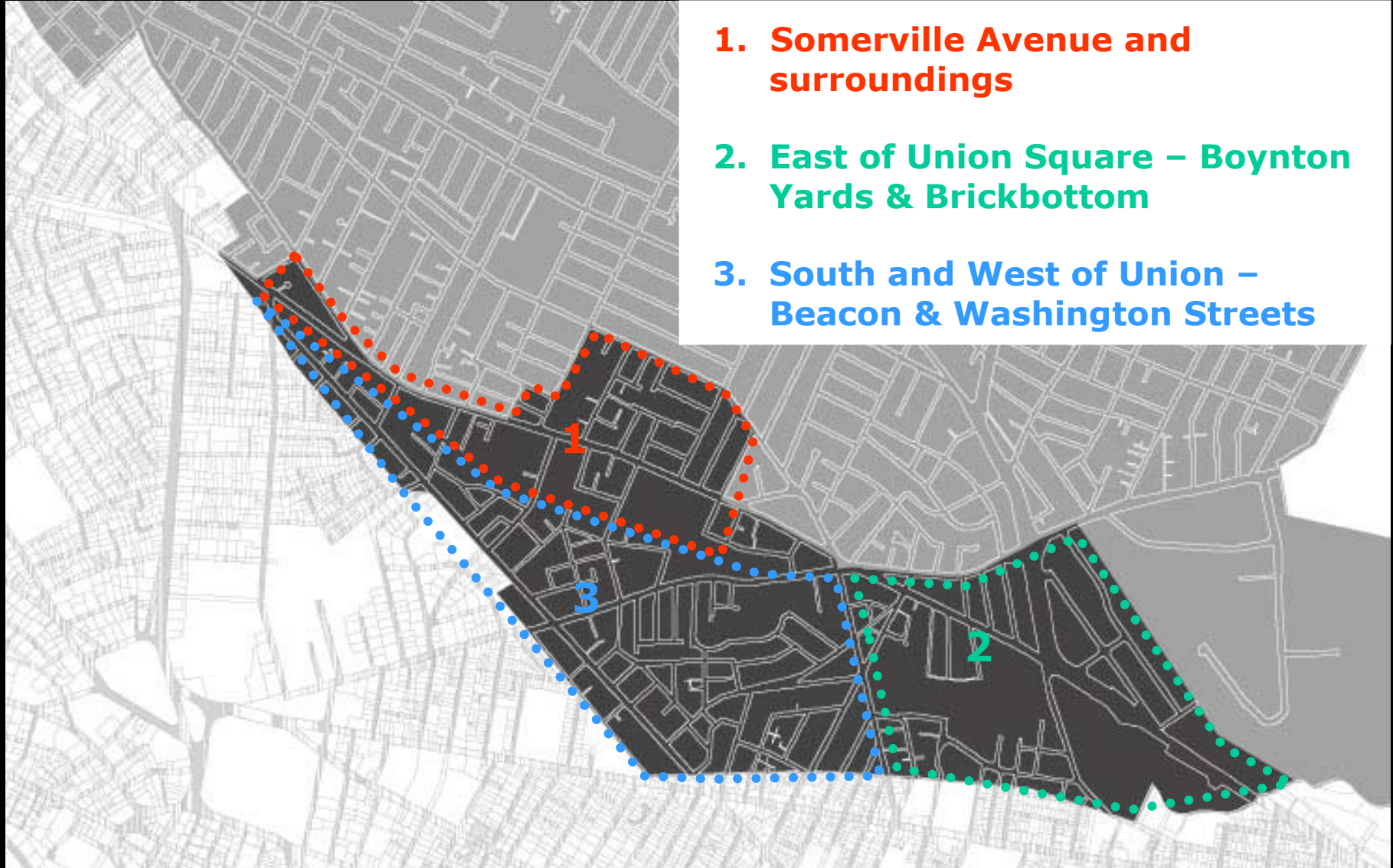
City of Somerville

Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development

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# Planning Process

- Three areas of focus



# Overall consensus – the major issues

- Traffic and pedestrian safety are important concerns
- Mixed use buildings would work well on Somerville Avenue
- Design and aesthetics are essential in the evaluation of new developments
- Parking and parking requirements are significant
  - Current requirements are too high and prevent new development
  - Significant new development will need more parking so residents are not inconvenienced

improve: pedestrian environment

enhance: design & aesthetics

encourage: retail mix

## improve: pedestrian environment

*Create a safe and inviting pedestrian environment where residents and visitors will feel comfortable walking between Porter Square and Union Square*

enhance: design & aesthetics

encourage: retail mix

# Community Strategies

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- Improve the streets and sidewalks
- Plant more trees
  - Streetscape Improvement Project in design
    - Sidewalk Improvements and improved crosswalks
    - Additional Trees (150+ total) and new benches and trash receptacles
    - Bike lane
    - Improved lighting (traffic & pedestrian scale) and additional traffic signals
    - Better signage for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians

## True or False

*"Once the Streetscape Improvement project is done, Somerville Avenue will be a better place to live."*

*"Somerville Avenue will never be pedestrian-friendly unless there are fewer trucks."*

*"The only way to get fewer trucks on Somerville Avenue is to ban them."*



# What other cities and towns have done...

- Signage
- Raised crossings
- Paving changes
- Lane shifts
- Curb extensions
- Street Furniture



improve: pedestrian environment

enhance: design & aesthetics

*Establish Somerville Avenue as an urban boulevard with distinctive architecture reflecting Somerville's history and creativity*

encourage: retail mix



# Community Strategies

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- Engage the Design Review Committee on Somerville Avenue
  - Work with elected officials and city staff to create Design Guidelines for the corridor

## True or False

*"Buildings on Somerville Avenue should be built right up to the street edge."*

*"I would rather have a vacant lot than a poorly-designed building."*

*"I would rather have vacant lots than allow too much development on Somerville Avenue."*

# Overview of Design Guidelines

- Two main types
  - Prescriptive: regulatory (like zoning) – less open to interpretation but may also limit creativity
  - Performance Oriented: descriptive – encourages flexible and innovative thinking, but requires effort to ensure objectives are met
- Role of the Design Review Committee
  - Reviews new development projects against the concepts in the design guidelines





# What other cities and towns have done...

- Guidelines require:
  - Buildings built out to the sidewalk
  - 50% glass facades at the ground level
  - Regulations re: signage, awnings, plantings



improve: pedestrian environment

enhance: design & aesthetics

encourage: retail mix

*Support existing commercial uses and encourage a better and more diverse mix of local, convenience and destination retail uses*

# Community Strategies

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- Assessment of the desired uses should be compiled
- Promotion and Marketing of the area can be done with Main Streets and the Chamber of Commerce
- Look at strategies to alleviate parking issues
  - Parking provided by private sector behind buildings in lots/garages

## True or False

*"Somerville Avenue needs better businesses to serve residents."*

*"Somerville Avenue needs more businesses to attract people from other cities and towns."*

*"Somerville Avenue should build on the strength of its clubs and restaurants."*

*"Somerville needs more housing, and Somerville Avenue would be a good location."*



# Potential Parking Strategies

## ■ Reduced Minimum Parking Requirements

- Agreements from the developer to support other modes of transportation  
OR for payment into a municipal parking fund or traffic mitigation fund

## ■ Shared Parking

- Spaces are shared by more than one user to maximize efficiency
- Establish procedures for implementation
  - Calculate minimum parking requirements for uses, acceptable walking distances, sharing agreements, verification and enforcement

## ■ Possible Shared Parking Locations on Somerville Avenue

- St. Anthony's Church and School
- Conway Park
- Cambridge Portuguese CU
- Industrial Uses





# What other cities and towns have done...

- Conduct full assessment of existing retails
- Identify possible niche markets
- Focus grants/loans to attract target businesses
- Develop retail incubation space that provides low rents and support services (entrepreneurial training)



# Implementation Issues

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- Zoning and Design Guidelines
- Community group organization
  - Prioritization of issues
- City Spending

# Photo Gallery









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